

## Katheti, Poros

20th August, 2025, 9 p.m.

Prelude, Allegro and Pastorale for Clarinet and Viola (1941)

Rebecca Clarke

- (i) *Prelude*
- (ii) *Allegro*
- (iii) *Pastorale*

Oleg Shebeta-Dragan, clarinet; Francis Kefford, viola

Divertissement for Bassoon and String Quintet (1942)

Jean Françaix

- (i) *Vivace*
- (ii) *Lento*
- (iii) *Vivo assai*
- (iv) *Allegro*

Valeria Curti, bassoon; Katharine Gowers & Bogdan Božović, violins; Francis Kefford, viola;  
Julian Arp, cello; Harald Edin, double bass

~ *Intermission* ~

String Quintet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 77

Antonín Dvořák

- (i) *Allegro con fuoco*
- (ii) *Scherzo. Allegro vivace*
- (iii) *Poco andante*
- (iv) *Finale. Allegro assai*

Katharine Gowers & Jannis Agraniotis, violins; Francis Kefford, viola; Julian Arp, cello;  
Harald Edin, double bass



## PROGRAMME NOTES

## Prelude, Allegro and Pastorale for Clarinet and Viola (1941)

Rebecca Clarke

Rebecca Clarke (1886–1979) was one of the first women to gain recognition as a professional violist and composer in the early 20th century in a male-dominated musical world. Though much of her output remained unpublished during her lifetime, her chamber music is now widely admired for its craftsmanship and originality.

The *Prelude, Allegro and Pastorale* was composed in 1941 during an enforced 3-year unplanned sojourn in the US when the outbreak of war had prevented her return to her British home. Severely homesick and separated from close friends during the worst war years for Britain, she sought solace in composition. The piece was received warmly at its premiere at the University of California, Berkeley in 1942 but was not published until 20 years after her death.

The piece showcases Clarke's intimate understanding of the tonal possibilities of both viola and clarinet, creating a dialogue rich with colour and nuance. Clarke had a special empathy for the clarinet, having grown up playing duos with her clarinettist brother, and she displays here a real mastery of the distinctive pairing of these two alto voices.

The lyrical *Prelude* opens with a march-like melody on the clarinet which is later taken over by the viola before the two instruments weave between each other in conversational style. The highly animated *Allegro* shows Clarke's wit and technical mastery in its lively counterpoint and angular motifs. The final *Pastorale* uses folk-like modal harmonies, the gentle interaction between the two instruments leaving a sense of serene, but melancholy, calm.

## Divertissement for Bassoon and String Quintet (1942)

Jean Françaix

A decade younger than the famous group of *belle epoch* French composers known as "Les Six", Jean Françaix shared with them a love of humour and a charming lightness of touch. He once remarked that music should "give pleasure" - a sentiment that permeates this *Divertissement*. It is a showcase for the bassoon, and remains a favourite with performers and audiences for its sparkling grace and energy. A playful, light-hearted *Introduction* is followed by a dance-like *Allegretto* with nimble, syncopated rhythms and a mischievous spirit. The Andante slow movement brings lyrical calmness before the jazzy and virtuosic Finale.

String Quintet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 77

Antonín Dvořák

The works of Czech composer, Anton Dvořák, have featured at most of the Saronic Chamber Music Festivals. The mastery of his ensemble writing for strings and piano, the richness of his melodic invention and the vibrancy of his Bohemian and Moravian folk rhythms have made his chamber music an enduring favourite with performers and audiences at this festival and internationally.

Written when he was 32, this is one of Dvořák's earliest chamber works. It lay unknown for a decade until he decided to revise and publish it. Dvořák chose to add a double bass to the traditional string quartet lineup for this quintet, rather than the more usual second viola. It adds substantially to the sonority of the sound textures and leaves the cello liberated from the bass line to explore more melodic voicing.

The opening Allegro con fuoco (with fire) opens with the composer's characteristic vitality and rhythmic drive. The Scherzo is a lively Czech dance full of humour and verve. The slow movement (Poco andante) provides lyrical contrast, and the Finale (Allegro assai) brims with exuberance and thematic invention, bringing the work to a thunderous close.

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